



EESTOM NAT thanne in how grete filthe thise shrewes ben ywrapped, and with which cleemesse thise good folk shynen? In this sheweth it wel, that to goode folk ne lakketh nevermo hir medes, ne shrewes lakken nevermo torments, for of alle thinges that ben ydoon, thilke thing, for which anything is don, it semeth as by right that thilke thing be the mede of that; as thus: yif a man renneth in the stadie, or in the forlong, for the corone, thanne lyth the mede in the corone for which he renneth. And I have shewed that blisfulnesse is thilke same good for which that alle thinges ben doon. Thanne is thilke same good purposed to the workes of mankinde right as a comune mede; which mede ne may ben dissevered fro good folk, for no wight as by right, fro thennesforth that him lakketh goodnesse, ne shal ben cleped good, for which thing, folk of goode maneres, hir medes ne forsaken hem nevermo, for albeit so that shrewes wexen as wode as hem list ayeins goode folk, yit neverthelesse the corone of wyse men shal nat fallen ne faden. for foreine shrewednesse ne binimeth nat fro the corages of goode folk hir propre honour. But yif that any wight rejoyse him of goodnesse that he hadde take fro withoute (as who seith, yif that any wight hadde his goodnesse of any other man than of himself), certes, he that yaf him thilke goodnesse, or elles som other wight, mighte binime it him. But for asmoche as to every wight his owne propre bountee yeveth him his mede, thanne at erst shal he failen of mede whan he forleteth to ben good. And at the laste, so as alle medes ben requered for men wenen that they ben goode, who is he that wolde deme, that he that is right mighty of good were partles of mede? And of what mede shal he be guerdoned? Certes, of right faire mede and right grete aboven alle medes. Remembre thee of thilke noble corolarie that I yaf thee a litel herbiforn; and gader it togider in this manere: so as good himself is blisfulnesse, thanne is it cleer and certein, that alle good folk ben maked blisful for they ben goode; & thilke folk that ben blisful, it acordeth and is covenable to ben goddes. Thanne is the mede of goode folk swich that no day shal enpeiren it, ne no wikkednesse ne shal derken it, ne power of no wight ne shal nat amenusen it, that is to seyn, to ben maked goddes.

AND sin it is thus, that goode men ne failen nevermo of hir mede, certes, no wys man ne may doute of underseyn, that the peyne of shrewes; that is to eth nat from himself nevermo, for so as goode and yvel, and peyne and medes ben contrarye, it mot nedes ben, that right as we seen bityden in guerdoun of goode, that also mot the peyne of yvel answer, by the contrarye party, to shrewes. Now the mede to goode folk, also is shrewednesse itself torment to shrewes. Thanne, whoso that ever is enteched and defouled teched & defouled with yvel. Yif shrewes en to hem that they ben withouten party of torment, sin they ben swiche that the ukehede thewes, which that is the utterest & the worste kinde of shrewednesse, ne defoulet ne entecheth nat hem only, but also look on shrewes, that ben the contrarye shipeth & folweth hem! for thou hast lemed a litel herbiforn, that al thing that is good; thanne is this the consequence, that it semeth wel, that al that is & hath beinge is good; this is to seyn, as who seyth, that beinge and unitee and goodnesse is al oon. And in this manere it folweth thanne, that al thing that failleth to ben good, it stineth for to be and for to han any beinge; wherefore it is, that shrewes stinten for to ben that they weren. But thilke othere forme of mankinde, that is to seyn, the forme of the body withoute, sheweth yit that these shrewes weren whylom men; wherefor, whan they ben perverted and tord into malice, certes, than han they forlorn the nature of mankinde. But so as only bountee and prowess may enhaunsen every man over other men; thanne mot it nedes be that shrewes, which that shrewednesse hath cast out of the condicioun of mankinde, ben put under the merite and the desert of men. Thanne bitydeth it, that yif thou seest a wight that be transformed into vyces, thou ne mayst nat wene that he be a man.

FOR yif he be ardaunt in avaryce, and that he be a ravinour by violence of foreine richesse, thou shalt seyn that he is lyke to the wolf. And yif he be felonous and withoute reste, and exerce his tonge to chydinges, thou shalt lyne him to the hound. And yif he be a prevey awaitour yhid, and rejoyseth him to ravish she by wyles, thou shalt seyn him lyke to

the fox whelpes. And yif he be distempre and quaketh for ire, men shal wene that he bereth the corage of a lyoun. And yif he be dreddful and fleinge, and dredeth thinges that ne oughten nat to ben dred, men shal holden him lyk to the hert. And yif he be slow and astoned and lache, he liveth as an asse. And yif he be light and unstedefast of corage, & chaungeth ay his studies, he is lyked to briddes. And if he be plounged in foule and unclene luxuries, he is witholden in the foule delices of the foule holden in the foule delices of the foule holden. Thanne folweth it, that he that forleteth bountee and prowess, he forleteth to ben a man; sin he may nat passen into the condicioun of God, he is tord into a best.

Metre III.
Vela Nititii dulcis.

URAS the wind aryvede the sailles of Alixes, duk of the contree of Narice, & his wandringe shippes by the see, into the ile theas Circes, the faire goddesse, daughter of the sonne, dwelleth; that medleth to hir newe gestes drinks that ben touched and maked with enchauntements. And after that hir hand, mighty over the herbes, hadde changed hir gestes into dyverse maneres; that oon of hem, is covered his face with forme of a boor; that other is chaunged into a lyoun of the contree of Marmorike, and his nayles and his teeth wexen; that other of hem is neweliche chaunged into a wolf, & howleth whan he wolde wepe; that other goth debonairly in the hous as a rygre of Inde.

BUT albeit so that the godhed of Mercuric, that is cleped the brid of Arcadie, hath had mercy of the duke Alixes, biseged with dyverse yveles, and hath unbounden him fro the pestilence of his ostesse, algates the roweres and the marineres hadden by this ydrawen into hir mouthes & dronken the wikkede drinkes. They that weren woxen swyn hadden by this ychaunged hir mete of breed, for to eten akornes of okes. Non of hir limes ne dwelleth with hem hole, but they han lost the voice and the body; only hir thought dwelleth with hem stable, that wepeth and biwelleth the monstuous chaunginge that they suffren. O overlight hand (as who seyth, O! feble and light is the hand of Circes the enchaunteresse, that chaungeth the bodies of folkes into bestes, to regard and to comparisoun of mutacioun that is maked by vyces); ne the herbes of Circes ne ben nat mighty, for albeit so that they may chaungen the limes of the body, algates yit they may nat chaunge the hertes;

for withinne is yhid the strengthe & vigor of men, in the secree tour of hir hertes; that is to seyn, the strengthe of resoun. But thilke venims of vyces to drawen a man to hem more mightily than the venim of Circes; for vyces ben so cruel that they percen and thorough, passen the corage withinne; and, though they ne anoye nat the body, yit vyces wooden to destroye men by wounde of thought.

Prose IV.

Cum ego, fateor, inquam.



CUM seyde I thus: I confesse and am aknowe it, quod I; ne I ne see nat that men may sayn, as by right, that shrewes ne ben chaunged into bestes by the qualtee of hir soules, albeit so that they kepen yit the forme of the body of mankinde. But I nolde nat of shrewes, of which the thought cruel woodeth alwey in to destruccioun of goode men, that it were leveful to hem to don that.

CERTES, quod she, ne is nat leveful to hem, as I shal wel shewe thee in covenable place; but natheles, yif so were that thilke that men wenen be leveful to shrewes were binomen hem, so that they ne mighte nat anoyen or doon harm to goode men, certes, a greet partye of the peyne to shrewes sholde ben allegged and releved, for albeit so that this ne seme nat credible thing, peraventure, to some folk, yit moot it nedes be, that shrewes ben more wrecches and unsely whan they may doon & performe that they coveiten, than yif they mighte nat complisshen that they coveiten. for yif so be that it be wrecchednesse to wilne to don yvel, than is more wrecchednesse to mowen don yvel; withoute whiche mowinge the wrecched wil sholde languisshen withoute effect. Than, sin that everiche of these thinges hath his wrecchednesse, that is to seyn, wil to don yvel & mowinge to don yvel, it moot nedes be that they ben constreyned by three unselinesses, that wolen and mowen & performen felonies and shrewednesses. I acorde me, quod I; but I desire gretly that shrewes losten sone thilke unselinesse, that is to seyn, that shrewes weren despoyled of mowinge to don yvel.

SO shullen they, quod she, soner, peraventure, than thou woldest; or soner than they herself wene to lakken mowinge to don yvel. for ther nis nothing so late in so shorte boundes of this lyf, that is long to abyde, nameliche,